


# Why is Entrepreneurship Awesome?

This post was adapted from [a presentation](#) by Rhett Power, an entrepreneur and leadership expert. In the [previous post](#), Rhett described some of the characteristics that make up a great entrepreneur. In this post, he offers 20 reasons why being an entrepreneur is, well, awesome.

An entrepreneur sows her own happiness through her fashion business. (Miranda  Harple/Yenkassa)

1. **Develop financial independence.** Financial independence means different things to different people. To some, it means having the cash to buy what they want. To others, it means saving for retirement or a new home. And to some others still, it simply means being able to pay the bills.
2. **Set your own schedule.** For the most part, entrepreneurs have greater command of their schedule. They will likely have many more demands on it, however, and they need to manage their time well.
3. **Bring your ideas to life.** If you know that you will not find peace in your life until your vision becomes a reality — and that you are willing to invest valuable resources in your vision — it could be time to start your own business
4. **Have creative freedom.** An entrepreneur's creativity is not defined or constricted by corporate red tape.
5. **Release the fear of being fired.** You won't likely fire yourself.
6. **Finally be challenged — in a good way.** Entrepreneurship is challenging and rewarding. Challenges breed solutions and equip you with the potential to innovate and be successful.
7. **Create a legacy.** As an entrepreneur, you can build something that will last a lifetime.
8. **Think globally.** My business went from one product and no customers to operating in 14 countries. If I can do it, so can you.
9. **Gain personal fulfillment.** Entrepreneurs aren't stuck in a career they aren't passionate about.
10. **Make an impact.** Entrepreneurs identify a problem then start a venture to solve that problem. You can impact the lives of many through entrepreneurship.
11. **Contribute to the economy.** Entrepreneurs can hire employees and contribute to economic growth.
12. **Call the shots.** Starting a business will yield the opportunity for you to become a leader.
13. **Become involved in every aspect.** Starting a business will give you the ultimate crash course in what it takes to build something from nothing and turn a profit.
14. **Put a personal touch back into doing business.** Many entrepreneurs have cited their reason for starting a business was to improve upon the existing way of doing business.

15. **Improve upon old ideas.** Entrepreneurs are complainers with solutions. They feel they can do it better than the next person.
16. **Celebrate massive accomplishments.** Starting a business, turning a profit and surviving the journey are huge accomplishments.
17. **Improve your quality of life.** Being an entrepreneur enables you to provide a better quality of life for you and your family.
18. **Invest in you and your future.** Consider your small business as an investment. Entrepreneurs not only reap the financial rewards of building a profitable company, but also gain tremendous insights into the most important investment of all — themselves.
19. **Design your own lifestyle.** One of the perks of entrepreneurship is the ability to live the lifestyle that best suits your desires.
20. **Enhance your personal power.** Let's be honest. When you build a business from scratch and earn appreciation and gratitude along the way, it is empowering. You feel significant.

To learn more about Rhett Power, visit his website at [RhettPower.com](http://RhettPower.com).

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## [Are You an Entrepreneur?](#)

This entrepreneur is making money from a flour-milling business. (Hawkesworth/DFID) 

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We live in an age where nearly 75 million young people around the world are unemployed. In some countries, more than 50 percent of young people are without work.

Unlike my father's generation, which was almost guaranteed a pension, a company job and social security, we don't have all of those guarantees. But entrepreneurship gives people options, and can change their lives.

What does "entrepreneurship" mean? The common answer is "starting a company," but entrepreneurship is so much more than starting a company. It's more of a life philosophy or, better yet, it's more your outlook on life.

Let's see if you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur.

1. **Do you have passion?** If you don't have a passion for what you're doing, you'll never succeed. There will be times when you don't make any money and you have no customers. Passion will help


you persist through these times and enable you to become the entrepreneur you're meant to be.

2. **Are you persistent?** An entrepreneur doesn't take "no" for an answer ... ever. They may concede but they will never give up. They will figure out a way to fit a square block into a round hole.
3. **Do you show initiative?** Entrepreneurs are self-starters. I pull into work at 7:00 every morning and I often don't leave until late. I get my pressing work done before anyone else shows up. Self-starting isn't just getting up early. It's working your tail off day and night on things that are important.
4. **Are you willing to take a stand?** If they want to be successful, entrepreneurs must be willing to be misunderstood for long periods of time. You have to be willing to take chances on things you believe in.
5. **Can you be flexible?** You will truly know that you're an entrepreneur if your business life is a little unpredictable. Entrepreneurs have to pivot consistently; this is what will dramatically improve the odds for success.
6. **Do you have strong people skills?** To succeed in business, you have to be willing and able to communicate. I will put a caveat on this, though: There are many entrepreneurs who aren't so good with people. To compensate, they team up with someone who is VERY good with people.
7. **Do you like to have fun?** After working such long hours, it's important for entrepreneurs to let loose once in a while.
8. **Are you a rule breaker?** Entrepreneurs are known for going against the status quo.
9. **Is the glass always half full?** Entrepreneurs tend to be relentlessly optimistic. It's good to have a bit of self-delusion that you can personally change and affect reality.
10. **Are you improving?** Successful entrepreneurs have a relentless commitment to self-improvement in all mental, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects. Ask yourself: "Did I go to bed smarter than when I woke up?"

Even if you didn't say "yes" to all 10 questions, the most important point is to act. Ninety-nine percent of people complain about problems; the other 1 percent does something about them. That 1 percent is driven by autonomy, mastery and purpose. They are the entrepreneurs.

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## **The Qualities of a Social Entrepreneur**

Juliana Rotich's personal   
mission is to make, fix  
and help others through

technology. (Courtesy of Juliana Rotich)

*A guest blog post by Juliana Rotich.*

What makes a social entrepreneurship venture successful are the qualities of a social entrepreneur. The venture is founded on a philosophy of selflessness where one lends oneself to the cause of social justice for the long haul. Social entrepreneurs must have conviction, passion and dedication driving them. In big but true words, they need love and hope to sustain their effort.

Social entrepreneurship's creative aspect also demands a flexible personality. It requires social entrepreneurs to accept that their own privilege will limit their understanding of a marginalized group's needs. Social entrepreneurs must look to "unexpected" places for knowledge to create inclusive solutions. They must place the social venture's goals above all else, and diminish their reliance on existing social structures. By doing so, they gain insight into the dynamics that continue to divide the privileged and the under-privileged.


A social entrepreneur must be adaptable to changing environments. Understanding how policies are formed, and the underlying causes of systemic poverty, will enable us to create ventures that speak to existing deficiencies. Social entrepreneurs not only have to think about the problem they are solving, but the ecosystem they are working in or trying to build. To be scalable and sustainable, social ventures, and the ideas behind them, must be cognizant of ever-changing needs.

Social ventures will vary depending on the different cultures and political environments from where they sprout. One constant, however, is the role they play in transforming societies. Social entrepreneurship is a commitment to the process of change and the creation of new social value. These ventures provide fertile grounds for the next generations to re-imagine and mold their societies accordingly. Their work will embolden global vision of economic equality and the alleviation of poverty.

*Juliana is co-founder of [Ushahidi Inc](#) and [BRCK Inc.](#), and is a trustee of the [iHub](#). She serves as strategic advisor on the councils of [BASF](#) and [Microsoft 4Afrika](#), and is an [MIT Media Lab](#) Director's Fellow and [TED Senior Fellow](#).*

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## [12 Tips for Building the Operations Side of Your Business](#)

Young entrepreneurs need to  manage without ego. (Thinkstock)

Some members of the [Young Entrepreneur Council](#) (YEC) were asked "What do you feel is most

important when it comes to building solid operations?" Operations are the processes and resources used to efficiently produce products or services.

## 1. Setting Team Expectations

"Twice a month we bring all managers and executives together for a big meeting to discuss each department and their accomplishments and challenges. It is also a time for other departments to give feedback to management. At the end of these meetings, everyone leaves with follow-up tasks." — David Schwartz, [Wireless Watchdogs](#)

## 2. Managing Without Ego

"Solid operations come from management who can admit when their systems are failing and are willing to change to improve." — Travis Steffen, [MentorMojo](#)

## 3. Having a Clear Process

"Having a clear process that every team member understands is extremely important. ... This improves efficiency and reduces the chance of fumbling information and having things slip through the cracks." — Michael Quinn, [Yellow Bridge Interactive](#)

## 4. Creating a Foolproof Foundation

"You have to start at the very base of your business in order to build a successful enterprise from it. For me, that is having a solid core team. I try to look at the first couple of people I hire when assembling a new business as a new family. ... They need to share my ambition and drive." — Rob Fulton, [AudioLumin](#)

## 5. Soliciting Feedback from Your Team

"It's important to gather feedback from your team often to make sure you're addressing inefficiencies and constantly improving as you grow." — Doreen Bloch, [Poshly Inc.](#)

## 6. Keeping Everything Transparent

"Cross-checks, social collaboration tools and breaking down silos are all ways to ensure that each operation is optimal. ... Across levels and departments, operations should be communicated, tested and approved." — Maren Hogan, [Red Branch Media](#)

## 7. Documenting Your Processes

"Documentation makes it easier to onboard new employees and saves your business from being reliant on any one person." — Dave Nevogt, [Hubstaff.com](#)

## 8. Building for the Future

"You have to look ahead and plan for all plausible changes in your business to ensure the operations you're building do not become quickly outdated." — Brittany Hodak, [ZinePak](#)

## 9. Keeping the 3 P's in Mind

"Building a solid operation is all about the three P's: process, people and product. Build your operation to flow and operate well with that and you'll have a successful business." — Pablo Palatnik, [ShadesDaddy.com](http://ShadesDaddy.com)

## 10. Providing Excellent Customer Service

"Provide the best customer service you can. ... You will at some point have a dissatisfied customer. But how you handle it will give you a solid reputation in your industry. — Amanda L. Barbara, [Pubslush](http://Pubslush)

## 11. Owning the Operation from Start to Finish

Hire someone to own the operation from start to finish. This person should be obsessed with the details, the metrics, the numbers. They should be elated when they hit their goal and inspired to do better when they miss it." — Phil Dumontet, [DASHED](http://DASHED)


## 12. Choosing the Right People

"It all comes down to choosing the right person and personality type for each role so that no one is doing tasks that they resent. ... Focus on leveraging strengths and passions. Then watch everything fall into place. " — Amanda Aitken, [AmandaAitken.com](http://AmandaAitken.com)

*From an article by the Young Entrepreneur Council (YEC), an invite-only organization composed of the world's most promising young entrepreneurs. In partnership with Citi, YEC recently launched [BusinessCollective](http://BusinessCollective), a free virtual mentorship program that helps millions of entrepreneurs start and grow businesses.*

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# The Importance of Inclusion

Juliana Rotich's personal  mission is to make, fix and help others through technology. (Courtesy of Juliana Rotich)

*A guest blog post by Juliana Rotich.*

A social venture must be able to innovate, and this can only be achieved through inclusion. The more inclusive the venture, the more dynamic the ideas and the more expansive the scope of effecting change! Individuals who embark on social entrepreneurship ventures create a domino effect,


encouraging others to invest, economically, physically and even emotionally, in bringing about positive social change. It is important that we leave bits of ourselves in our work and inspire others to value fairness and justice.

It is therefore important that these initiatives provide avenues in which people, who are currently made invisible by mainstream ideologies, see themselves as being active in the change-making process. As a creative enterprise, social entrepreneurship is catalytic in providing solutions for many challenges globally. By its nature alone, this type of venture encourages young populations, whose voices have long been subdued, to be actively involved in the development process by thinking outside the box. Social entrepreneurship continually fuels the passion and drive that sustains momentum for more innovative start-ups.

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## Out-of-the-Box Thinking Leads to Social Good

2014 Mandela Washington   
Fellow Nomvula Mhambi  
(State Dept.)

Nomvula Mhambi is a 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow from Zimbabwe and a [U.S. African Development Foundation](#) grant recipient. With more than five years running her own marketing and advertising business, Mhambi has learned quite a few lessons about [social entrepreneurship](#). We sat down with her to see what advice she had to share with YALI Network members. (Please note that some of her remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.)

### **Q: Tell us a bit about your business Disruptive Innovation.**

*Mhambi:* Disruptive Innovation is a marketing and advertising social enterprise which I started in 2012. We generate and implement ideas and provide vibrant, unconventional but practical communication solutions to enhance brands while developing and empowering communities.

### **Q: What's the significance behind the name "Disruptive Innovation"?**

*Mhambi:* Disruptive innovation is described as the introduction of new technologies, products or

services to promote change and gain advantage over the competition. It requires you to embrace a radically different approach to product development or marketing. Often a product of out-of-the-box thinking, disruptive changes can initially seem out of step with contemporary preferences but prove successful in their ability to create new market opportunities where none existed before. I came across this term while trying to define my advertising social enterprise, and this concept ticked all the correct boxes for what I had set out to achieve with my business.

## **Q: What encouraged you to open your own business?**

*Mhambi:* I thrive on working with and meeting different people and generally being of service to others. I wanted to be able to act on my ideas, rather than waiting for them to become a priority to someone else. I also wanted to share my creative business sense with people and organizations who, like me, believe the box does not exist and are willing to explore the infinite possibilities out there. Working for someone else would have restricted me and the level of impact and change I could contribute.

## **Q: What goals have you set for your business?**

*Mhambi:* Our short-term goal is to grow our brand to be recognized among the leading social enterprise business models in Zimbabwe. The long-term goal is to expand the business to include a creative hub for people in my industry to gather and tackle social issues together. Through our expertise, we can increase the impact we will have on our continent.

## **Q: In what ways are you using marketing and advertising to solve a social problem?**

*Mhambi:* We identify the problem and create sustainable links to the solution. The skeletal thought process of addressing any of our clients' needs is "How will the communities benefit from our work and how do we maximize sustainability?"

## **Q: What encouraged you to select this business model?**

*Mhambi:* I am passionate about advertising and helping people, but there are limitations with mainstream advertising and advising clients on how much good they can do with their brand. My business being known as a social enterprise means when a client seeks out our services, they know and understand our core values and how we will apply them to our work.

## **Q: What are some of the benefits of this approach?**

*Mhambi:* The social enterprise model has allowed me to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Consumers appreciate it when they can see their purchases of goods and services come back and make positive changes within their communities. This is the most rewarding part of my business.

## **Q: Have you encountered any challenges? If so, how have you overcome them?**

*Mhambi:* Challenges are an everyday thing in our business. We involve several stakeholders — the




client, the municipalities, the communities, for example — in our work and decisionmaking process at any given time. We overcome challenges by stepping back to assess how best to navigate the particular challenge, and by being adaptable.

## **Q: What's your advice for YALI Network members looking to break into social entrepreneurship?**

*Mhambi:* They must have purpose, passion and perseverance. They should know what the purpose of their business is besides profit making. They should be passionate about their business so when they have nothing else on their side, their passion to fulfill their purpose drives them forward. And when they are ready to give up, after they have failed a few times, they must remember the passion they have for their purpose and persevere!

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## **Reinventing Society Through Entrepreneurship**

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When we think of societal transformation, we imagine a rigorous activism geared toward changing a political system or advancing a social cause. Rarely, do we look at the ways in which our day-to-day today labor can bring about the same change while creating revenue. This is how I view social entrepreneurship; it is not just an extension of the nonprofit sector, but a business opportunity. In working toward the creation of new social value, social entrepreneurship embraces the visions of both nonprofit and business culture.

Whereas entrepreneurship starts with the recognition and evaluation of an opportunity, social entrepreneurship carries on to establish what critical societal needs this venture will serve. At the heart of most social entrepreneurship ventures, you will find a persistent resolve to address social problems of poverty and marginalization. A perfect example is the use of technology to foster inclusivity and build capacity in local communities. If we examine the various ways technology has extended our capabilities, and more importantly has inspired interconnectedness, we can see how digital entrepreneurs might use these aspects to meet the needs of marginalized groups around the world. But efforts to bring a voice to the voiceless must be sustainable. We must devise inclusive ideas that can be incorporated into the larger socio-political framework to affect future regulation

and policies.

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## Delivering Hope to Mothers

Nigerian entrepreneur Adepeju Jaiyeoba meets President Obama. (White House/Pete Souza)

Some [40,000 women](#) in Nigeria stand to die during pregnancy this year.

This statistic became a reality for Adepeju Jaiyeoba, 31, when she lost a close friend to childbirth complications in 2011. The loss jolted her into action.

That year, Jaiyeoba started the [Brown Button Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization that trains birth attendants in Nigeria's rural villages. To date, the organization has trained more than 8,000 birth attendants, who, like midwives, provide health care to expectant mothers during pregnancy and childbirth.

But Jaiyeoba, a lawyer by trade, quickly realized mothers-to-be in her country needed more than advocacy, and their attendants needed more than training. In 2013, she launched [Mother's Delivery Kit](#), a social enterprise that provides sterile supplies for childbirth. Each kit costs around \$5, and the company employs some 85 people.

Jaiyeoba says the Mother's Delivery Kit model is not only helping to save women and babies but also bringing income to the people who make and distribute the kits. More than 20,000 kits have been produced.

## Bypassing Roadblocks

While these numbers reveal the success of Jaiyeoba's efforts, they obscure the challenges she has faced. When she first shared her delivery kit idea with a colleague, she was warned not to give up her prestigious job as a lawyer. But after two months, Jaiyeoba became restless and approached someone else: her pediatrician brother.

With savings from her legal work and expert advice from her sibling, Jaiyeoba created 200 sample kits. "We sent out samples to different communities, and we were keen on getting feedback to improve the product," she said. It soon became clear that birth attendants in other parts of the country had different practices and preferences.

So Jaiyeoba and the team assembled a new kit that they hoped the majority of Nigerians would embrace. One adjustment was to include olive oil — since many Nigerians, particularly in rural areas, rub both the mother and baby in the oil for spiritual protection.

Now that Jaiyeoba had something she knew people would use, she needed to find a better way to get it to them. She began to rethink her supply chain to get around Nigeria's ailing infrastructure. With grant money from the U.S. African Development Foundation, Jaiyeoba's team established distribution points in central and eastern Nigeria. Now, the delivery kits no longer need to leave from Lagos, making them more accessible to people in rural areas.

## A Presidential Pitch

Jaiyeoba became a [Mandela Washington Fellow](#) in 2014 and has used her friendships with other fellows to expand her company's reach. She is working with Ghanaian fellow Laud Ampomah Boateng to provide delivery kits in districts across Ghana and creating a mobile platform focused on prenatal care, child rearing and infertility with Côte d'Ivoirian fellow Jean-Patrick Ehouman.

In May 2015, she was one of five emerging entrepreneurs invited to [pitch her idea](#) at a White House event showcasing the impact of U.S. government initiatives. It also set the stage for the upcoming [Global Entrepreneurship Summit](#) in Kenya.

The event gave her a chance to look back on the obstacles she faced. "You can actually build business models around social problems," she said.

## Lessons Learned


Starting her own nonprofit foundation and social enterprise has taught Jaiyeoba a lot. Here is her advice for YALI Network members:

- *Share your ideas and get feedback.* "I get that people hide their ideas because they are afraid of somebody else stealing it, but if somebody else steals your idea, it is because it is easy," Jaiyeoba said. "It's important to share your ideas to receive constructive criticism, and to use the criticism, to ultimately create a better product or service for your public."
- *Start with your network.* "Most young people still believe the first thing you need when starting out is money," Jaiyeoba said. "It's not true. You need money to build and scale your business, but you must focus on building your network first."
- *Show your passion.* "Let people see your passion and understand what you are offering.," Jaiyeoba said. "That's the way to find people who will make sure your idea sees the light of day."

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## [Connecting Artisans in Kenya with](#)

# Consumers Everywhere


Soko artisans like Veronicah can connect to a global market with just a mobile phone.   
(Courtesy of Soko)

For years, women throughout Kenya have made money by making jewelry. But the global market is complex. Middlemen often control access, and that has limited these artisans' earning potential.

In 2011, Kenyan entrepreneur Catherine Mahugu thought technology could help.

Armed with a bachelor's degree in computer science, Mahugu teamed up with U.S. entrepreneurs Ella Peinovich and Gwendolyn Floyd to start [Soko](#), an e-commerce platform where artisans can sell their jewelry to consumers around the world using basic mobile phones.


"It's a brand that helps fashion a better world," Mahugu said of Soko, revealing marketing savvy in her description.

Women own nearly 75 percent of the vendors registered with Soko. (Courtesy of   
Soko)

Mahugu said Soko's platform breaks from traditional business models by offering women at the beginning of the supply chain access to the global market. These artisans do not need a computer, Internet access or even a bank account – just a mobile phone.

Artisans register with the company, then upload product photos to Soko's e-commerce platform. When a consumer purchases an item, Soko sends a courier to pick it up and have it shipped.

Mahugu's approach has proven popular. In 2014, more than 1,000 artisans were registered. They sold 42,000 items to consumers in 30 countries. What's more, their average household income grew by 400 percent.

Soko's staff makes funny faces for the camera. Mahugu is in the front row, fourth   
from the left. (Courtesy of Soko)

While the numbers explain the company's popularity with artisans, Mahugu said she has faced real challenges in ramping up the company. Here are the challenges she talked of and solutions the team at Soko is employing to beat them:

*Failing infrastructure.* "We have an in-house logistics network just to compensate for the lack of [transportation] infrastructure here [in Kenya] and the incomplete addresses," Mahugu said.

*Unreliable services.* Power interruptions and Internet outages make coordination difficult, especially because many artisans live in rural areas with less power and connectivity. To compensate, Soko has developed resilient operational tools for an online model. "We've been able to apply [these tools] through an offline social network," Mahugu said. These tools mean that Soko can function even when the power goes out.


*Slow technology adoption.* “The e-commerce culture in Africa has yet to blossom like it has in the developed countries,” Mahugu said. Soko accepts mobile money “just to tackle the issue of distrust of online payments.” The company also settles disputes through social media. These methods provide a positive customer experience.

Soko hopes to expand its platform to artisans in other African countries. Mahugu said there are key indicators as to whether a country is a viable market for the e-commerce platform. They include the availability of mobile money, the adoption rate of new technology, the reliability of shipping services, the quality of existing infrastructure and government policies toward entrepreneurs.

“Internet connectivity is just revolutionizing how businesses in Africa operate,” Mahugu said. To be successful, entrepreneurs must “go with the tide of change and innovation, not against it.”

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## Online Learning Blossoms in Zimbabwe

Teresa Mbagaya at the launch of   
EcoSchool (Courtesy of Teresa  
Mbagaya)

A growing number of young Africans are building innovative technologies and businesses. In Zimbabwe, online learning blossomed under Teresa Mbagaya, a 28-year-old Kenya native who in 2013 launched [Econet Education](#), which offers free and reliable access to more than 50 online education services featuring video lectures by university faculty and other educational materials accessible to anyone, anywhere.

The youngest executive to lead Econet Education, Mbagaya was named one of the “30 most promising young entrepreneurs in Africa 2015” by Forbes business magazine.

Econet Education subjects range from test preparation to how to start a business, to agriculture, engineering, medicine, languages and music theory. The service even has an early education section that includes sites for kids run by National Geographic magazine and the American Public Broadcasting Service.

Its EcoSchool section offers tablets on which students can access textbooks at low cost.

“The idea behind EcoSchool goes beyond simply making books available at a cheaper price,” Mbagaya says. “It is part of [a] strategy to help students and their lecturers gain access to materials and courses from across the globe.”

The EcoSchool tablets and software significantly improved the learning experience, especially for

girls who could not stay late at libraries. With the lightweight, portable devices, they could study after school at home and pay as little as \$6 a month for study materials.

EcoSchool includes a textbook library, an educational chat platform allowing social interaction between students on study material, and an online education resource center so users can check for faculty-related resources on career development and study programs from global sources.

“EcoSchool offers digital education for all, giving you access to quality information, anywhere, anytime. Think of EcoSchool as education for the digital generation,” the service states on its website. So far, EcoSchool is available only to Harare-based Econet Wireless subscribers in Zimbabwe.

Recognizing Mbagaya’s entrepreneurship in information technology, Microsoft recently named her head of education for East and southern Africa.

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